

Surely You Are All-Powerful Over Everything

إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Al-Qadīr is one of the most beautiful names (*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*) of Almighty Allāh. Theologians (*mutakallimīn*) define it as:

...هُوَ الْفَاعِلُ لِمَا يَشَاءُ عَلَىٰ قَدْرِ مَا تَقْتَضِي الْحِكْمَةُ لَا زَائِدًا عَلَيْهِ وَلَا نَاقِصًا
عَنْهُ...

“...One who does whatever He wants according to Wisdom, nothing more or less than that...”¹

And the form (*wazn*) of the word “*Qadīr*” which is *فاعِل* / *fa'īl* denotes permanence. Therefore, He is permanently Able and Powerful.

Not only is He Powerful, but he is the Powerful, such that none other than He has any kind of independent power. If any power is found with anyone it is by the permission of Allāh. No one can claim to have a power ‘other than His Power.’ Every conceivable power exists and subsists by His Power. The following dictum, which appears in a number of supplications, refers to this very subtle issue:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ.

“There is no strength or power save by Allāh.”²

The Holy Qur’ān, emphasizing the fact that every kind of power belongs to Allāh, says:

﴿ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرُونَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴾

“...though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs to God, and that God is severe in punishment...”³

Realizing this, we conclude that only He can fulfill all our aforementioned requests. It is therefore important to seek His assistance solely. In saying ‘*Innaka ‘al-kulli shay’in Qadir*’ we mean ‘since You are All-Powerful, we ask all the aforementioned needs from You.’

If we ponder over the Holy Qur’an we find that many of the verses are concluded with Names of Almighty Allah. Exegetes say that in order to understand such verses properly, we should try to reflect on these Divine Names, for they form the reason behind the verses. For example in verse 1 of chapter al-Fatir we read:

﴿ أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعٍ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

“All praise belongs to God, originator of the heavens and the earth, maker of the Angels [His] messengers, possessing wings, two, three or four [of them]. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes. Indeed God has power over all things.”⁴

Commenting on the last clause of this verse, ‘Allamah Tabataba’i says:

﴿ وَقَوْلُهُ ﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ تَعْلِيلٌ لِّجَمِيعِ مَا تَقَدَّمَهُ أَوْ الْجُمْلَةَ الْأَخِيرَةَ وَالْأَوَّلُ أَظْهَرُ. ﴾

“The clause ‘Indeed God has power over all things’ of the verse is a reason for all the aforementioned [i.e. originating the Heavens and the earth, making the angels...etc.] or a reason for the last clause [i.e. He adds to the creation whatever He wishes]. But the former is more apparent [i.e. it is a reason for all the aforementioned].”⁵

Likewise is the case with many of our supplications⁶, including the supplication under discussion. If we look at the supplication as a whole, we would realize that the last verse is the reason behind all the aforementioned verses. In other words:

- Since only Allāh is the All-Powerful, only He Can do whatever He Wants;
- Therefore we seek all the aforementioned requests from Him.

In the previous verses we came to realize that God has a universal law: to get things done by their causes. Hence we should also seek the causes of what we aspire. However, we emphasized that the Principal Cause is Almighty Allāh alone. Therefore we should not look at the agent of grace as an independent provider. The only Independent Provider is Allāh. To Him Alone belongs everything in all the stages of its existence and subsistence. Therefore, to rely on the causes stems from ignorance and is a manifestation of practical polytheism.

Was it was not for him I would have perished?

There is an ignorant tendency among some people when it comes to appreciating the help they receive from their friends. A well-wisher may support a person and his family, and thereby emancipate him from many obstacles in life. Then, having attained the state of affluence, the person would say I thank Allāh first and then so and so, for had it not been for his assistance I would not have reached where I am. Such kind of thinking in our traditions is termed as practical polytheism. This is because the helper is just an intermediary of grace (*wasitah*) and has no independence whatsoever, and thus cannot be taken as a second independent helper.

The great saint Ibn Fahd al-Hillī in his well-known prayer manual ‘Uddat al-Dīn’ narrates the following tradition:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ص) فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: ﴿ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴾، قَالَ: هُوَ قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ: لَوْ لَا فَلَانٌ لَهَلَكْتُ، وَلَوْ لَا فَلَانٌ لَمَا أَصَبْتُ كَذَا وَكَذَا، وَلَوْ لَا فَلَانٌ لَضَاعَ عِيَالِي. أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ لِلَّهِ شَرِيكًا فِي مَلِكِهِ يَرْزُقُهُ وَيُدْفَعُ عَنْهُ؟ قُلْتُ: فَيَقُولُ لَوْ لَا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَنَّ عَلَيَّ بِفُلَانٍ لَهَلَكْتُ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، لَا بَأْسَ بِهَذَا وَنَحْوِهِ.

“Imām Abū ‘Abdillāh (al-Sādiq (as)) is reported to have said about the verse ﴿And most of them do not believe in Allāh without associating others (with Him)﴾ (12: 106)’ that it refers to when a man says: ‘Was it not for so and so, I would have perished, and was it not for so and so I would not have got such and such a thing, and was it not for so and so, my family would perish. Don’t you see that he has made a partner for Allāh in His Kingdom, who sustains him and averts [evil from him]? [The narrator says:] I said: ‘What if he were to say if Allāh would not have Blessed me with so and so I would have perished. The Imām (as) said: Yes, there is no problem in this and the like.’”⁷

The above however should not lead one to overlook the traditions of expressing gratitude and thanks to whosoever has done good. Such traditions emphasize the ‘nobility’ of the agent of Allāh’s Grace. But gratitude should never be mingled with polytheism and words of ignorance. In fact the good doer is required to express gratitude to Almighty Allāh for having given him the succor (*tawfīq*) to do all the good, and hence be availed with the Godly spirit.

The Imperfection of the Receptacle

Some times although the agent of grace is infinitely able, but the receptacle of grace is imperfect. Therefore, if the receptacle due to its narrowness cannot attain more than its capacity, the fault is not with the Provider of Grace, Who is *al-Jawād*, and always wishes to give more and more. To explain this law, Almighty Allāh cites a very beautiful a parable is Sūrat al-Ra’d:

﴿ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا ﴾

“He sent down water from the sky, and the channels flowed, each according to their measure...”⁸

Hence, water is poured down in abundance, but not all receptacles receive equally. Those receptacles, which are narrow receive less, whereas those with greater capacity receive more. Therefore, it is not the fault of the provider, but the recipient and receptacle.

If this law is correctly understood, we will be able to realize the reason why many of the aforementioned requests are not accomplished. Consider the first two verses of this noble supplication and apply the same law in the other verses:

O Allāh: Instill happiness in the hearts of the inhabitants of the grave.

We said that one of the means of instilling happiness in the grave is seeking forgiveness for the deceased:

﴿ أَلَمْ يَتَّيَمُنْ لِيَفْرَحْ بِالرَّحْمِ عَلَيْهِ وَالْإِسْتِغْفَارِ... ﴾

“Surely a dead person rejoices when he is pitied upon and forgiveness is sought for him....”⁹

But such forgiveness can only benefit one who has not extinguished the light of his innate nature (*al-fitrah*) and has left this world in the state of belief (*īmān*). For the kuffār (those disbelievers who despite knowing the truth of Islam, rejected the same) seeking forgiveness would not instill any kind of happiness. Here the receptacle is deficient and not Allāh’s Grace. The Holy Qur’ān citing examples of

such hard-hearted people says:

﴿ ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ﴾

“Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness...”¹⁰

And in verses 6–7 of chapter al-Baqarah Almighty Allāh informs us about the disbelievers that:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴾

“As for the disbelievers, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allāh has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.”

It should be noted that these disbelievers earned the causes that lead to the sealing of the hearts themselves. One should therefore not make an error and conceive that Allāh (swt) forcefully sealed their hearts and they had no volition to select a better path. However eagerly were we to aspire for the salvation of such people, there is no room for change, because the receptacle is deficient.

Perhaps the following verse draws our attention to the same situation:

﴿ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴾

“Whether you plead forgiveness for them or do not plead forgiveness for them, even if you plead forgiveness for them seventy times, God shall never forgive them because they defied God and His Apostle; and God does not guide the transgressing lot.”¹¹

O Allāh Enrich Every Poor Person

Those poor people who continue doing acts that hinder their sustenance, should never dream to be rich. Negative poverty both in the material as well as spiritual sense is a deficiency that comes about due to the receptacle of sustenance. Persistence in extravagant spending, indiscipline, etc. are a practical expression of saying ‘I do not want to be self-sufficient. Therefore the individual as well as the society in

order to attain affluence should eradicate the impediment hampering their receptacle of grace.

In short, not getting our needs, even if they serve as means for our spiritual upliftment, is due to the impediments that we create and bring about.

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1. This should not be mistaken to mean that He is unable to do what is not according to His Wisdom. Rather whatever He does is always wise.
 2. It is reported in al-Kāfi that Imām al-Bāqir would recite the following whenever he left his house: Bismillāhi kharajtu wa ‘ala Allāhi tawakkaltu illā hawli wa illā quwwata illi billāhi [In the Name of Allāh I leave and on Allāh do I trust, and there is no strength or power save by Allāh [al-Kāfi, v. 2, pg. 543].
 3. Holy Qur’ān, 2:165
 4. Ibid., 35:1
 5. al-Ma‘zīn, v. 17, pg. 7
 6. Refer to the supplications of Sahīfat al-Sajjīdiyyah and you will notice that Imām al-Sajjīd (‘a) concludes a number of his supplications with the Sublime Names of Almighty Allāh. (Author.)
 7. ‘Uddat al-Dīn, pg. 99
 8. Holy Qur’ān, 13:17
 9. al-Mahajjat al-Baydī, v. 8. pg. 292
 10. Holy Qur’ān, 2:74
 11. Holy Qur’ān, 9:80

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